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ARMOR OF THE ROYAL GUARD OF SAXONY

Some of the magnificence of the court of the Electors of Saxony in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries centered about the royal body guard. Equipped with morion helmets, daggers, and halberds richly engraved, they formed a picturesque group in that history-ridden district which had furnished one line of kings to Germany, and had dictated what German kings of a later line might do.

There are many of the guard morions and halberds still in existence, and one of the daggers is in the collection of the late Sir Guy Laking. For a time, the guards must have worn cabasets instead of the high-combed morions, since some of these also are to be found in various armor collections. It is the morions, though, that are the more numerous. They crop up in every large armor collection in Europe and America. Some of them have fallen upon evil days and have passed quite out of the hands of collectors. In his catalogue of the Rutherford Stuyvesant collection, Dr. Bashford Dean says:

"Morions of this type appear to have been worn by the electoral guard of Christian I, Christian II, and Johann Georg; they were present in great number in the Dresden Armory, but were given away, exchanged, or sold, especially during the middle years of the last century. At present, the royal collection contains only six specimens. It may be interesting to note that many of these valuable morions were, at one time, given by a Saxon ruler to the court theatre; they were seen by the writer among the stage 'properties' in 1912."

They vary in quality according to the date of production, the earlier being much the finer in shape and workmanship. Those of the seventeenth century were merely weakly-built parade helmets. They all bore, either on skull or comb, the arms of Saxony, a shield with crossed swords, and the arms of their master, the Elector. Besides these, each morion was etched with two circular medallions in richly gilt borders. On one of these appeared the story of Mutius Scaevola, the Roman, who, threatened by his emperor with death, thrust his hand into the flame to show how little death meant to him. The other medallion portrayed an equally popular Roman hero, young Marcus Curtius. His legend ran that when a chasm appeared over night in the forum of Rome, after the earthquake of 362 B. C.,

the oracles declared that it would only close when Rome should sacrifice her greatest treasure. Curtius, hearing this, announced his belief that Rome's dearest possession was a brave citizen in arms, and he leaped, mounted and in full armor, into the pit which at once closed after him.

These two examples of bravery were chosen for the Elector's guards to wear, but we find them on many other pieces of armament of the period. The two heroes had a long life in art. A French suit in the Musée d'Artillerie is embossed with the two stories; an Italian powder primer, and two powder flasks, also Italian, in the Wallace collection show Marcus Curtius taking the leap. Mutius Scaevola is carved on another Italian primer in the same collection. Both the warriors appear on an Italian morion of about 1580, and on a circular shield of 1540 each hero is twice depicted.

The Saxon morions are to be found in the Dresden Armory and probably in other German collections. Six of them are in the Metropolitan Museum in New York, four in the Wallace collection, one in the Musée d'Artillerie which has also a Saxon guard cabasset, one in the collection of Amory Carhart, two in the Rutherford Stuyvesant collection, and two in the collection of Dr. Bashford Dean. The 1901 catalogue of the Richards collection in Rome mentions one, as does also the Spiller catalogue of the same year.

The Cleveland Museum of Art acquired one of the morions and a halberd of the guard as well, with the Severance gift of Frank Gair Macomber's collection in 1916. (See illustration on cover, and page 150.) The helmet is, I should say, one of the earlier ones, well modelled, with a fairly high skull and a comb of medium height. Its surface is russeted, and bands of etched and gilded leaf-scrolls edge the medallions, the skull, and the comb. On one side are the arms of Saxony, on the other the Elector's arms, and the two heroes have each his medallion on the sides of the skull.

Some of the morions have a row of gilded rivets about the base of the skull, their heads shaped as lion masks, while others have rosette rivets. The Cleveland specimen has the lion masks, in good condition, though several lions have lost the rings they once held in their mouths, and where a mask has been lost, it has been replaced by a rosette. The plume holder of this morion is missing, but the Spiller catalogue yields the

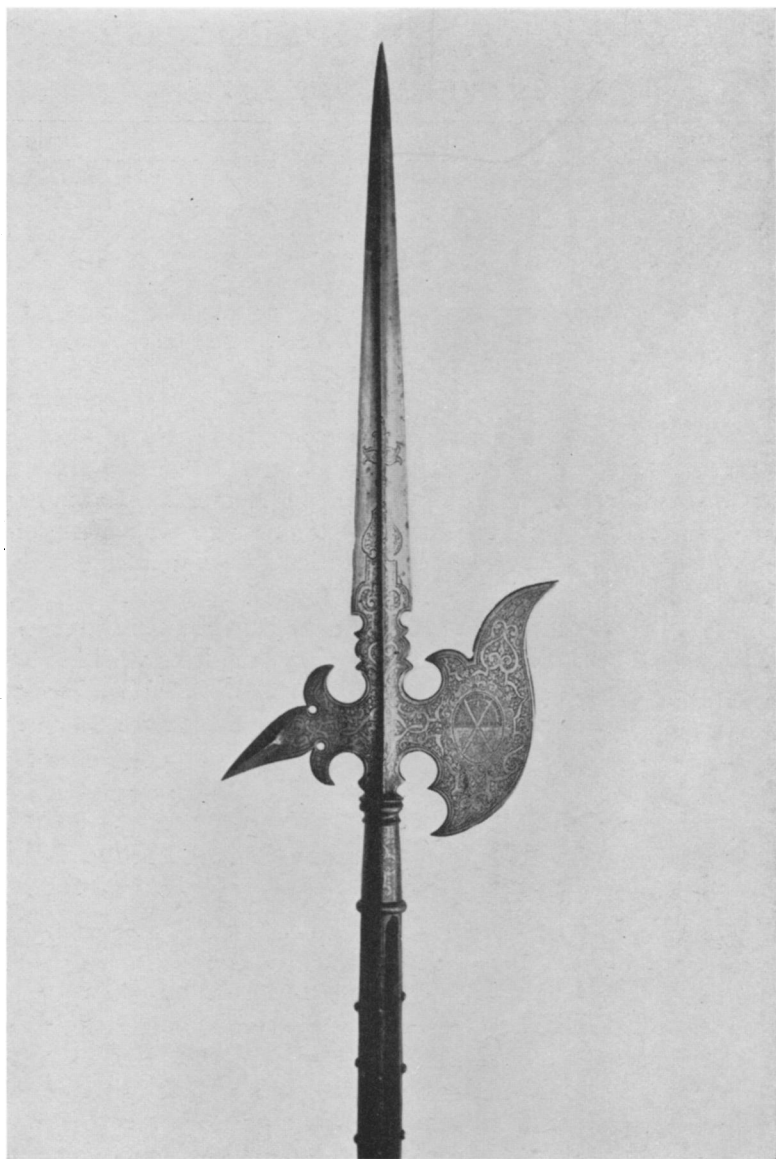
information that it was in the form of a caryatid. One of the morions, that in Mr. Carhart's collection, is supplied with hinged ear pieces, on each plate of which is a lion mask.

A russet surface is to be found on many of the morions, but some are bright steel, some blackened, and a number of them have been blued. Probably they were all darkened originally, their gilded bands and medallions making a brave showing against the contrasting backgrounds, but some have fallen into the hands of caretakers with more zeal than wisdom, and so a number of unfortunate helmets have been scoured white. In this respect, as in others, the morion of the Severance collection has fared well. It is one of the best of a famous group of helmets, already valuable and becoming more so as the merits of fine armor are gradually appreciated. HELEN IVES GILCHRIST

DEALERS' PRINT EXHIBITION

An interesting and comprehensive exhibition of prints was held under the auspices of The Print Club in Gallery IX, commencing September twenty-ninth, with a private view for the members of the Club, and terminating on October fifteenth. At the private view Theodore Sizer, Curator of Prints and Oriental Art, was introduced to the members of The Print Club, while Douglas Moore, Curator of the Department of Musical Arts, took this occasion to present his original composition, a suite for the organ, with four subtitles: Fifteenth Century Armor, A Madonna of Botticini, The Chinese Lion and the Unhappy Flutist, and A Statue by Rodin. These pieces are an attempt to portray musically moods evolved by various museum objects. The first was an elusive little march; the second in the style of plain-chant; the third a descriptive piece in modern style; and the fourth the gradual emergence and development of a broad theme as suggested by Rodin's Man of the Age of Bronze.

The exhibition consisted of three hundred and fifty prints, each of the seven leading out-of-town dealers contributing fifty, covering a complete spread of four and a half centuries, beginning with Schongauer (1440-1491) up to Zorn (1860-1920), Cameron (1865—) and McBey (1883—). Dürer (both in wood and in engraving), the little Masters, the early Dutch landscapists, and Rembrandt were particularly well represented. Then followed the later Dutchmen, the Italians, the great French school of portrait engraving, Goya, the French litho-



HALBERD OF THE ELECTOR OF SAXONY'S GUARD
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. John L. Severance